

1007

AN  
EXHORTATION

TO THE  
Religious Education of Children :

BEING  
A CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE  
*ELDERS AND MESSENGERS*  
OF THE  
SEVERAL BAPTIST CHURCHES,

MEETING AT

AULCESTER,  
BENGWORTH,  
BEWDLEY,  
BIRMINGHAM,  
BOURTON,  
BRITTLE-LANE,

BROMSGROVE,  
CIRENCESTER,  
DUDLEY,  
HOOK-NORTON,  
LEOMINSTER,  
NEITHER-TOWN,

PERSHORE,  
TUKESBURY,  
UPTON,  
WARWICK,  
WESTMANCOAT,  
WORCESTER, &c.

BEING MET IN ASSOCIATION, AT BROMSGROVE, IN WORCESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND, JUNE 11 AND 12, 1783.

PREPARED BY *JAMES BUTTERWORTH*,  
PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH AT BROMSGROVE.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will  
not depart from it. PROVERBS.

---

*PHILADELPHIA*,  
PRINTED BY LANG AND USTICK.

1795.

# EXHIBITION

Religious Education of Children

ANNUAL REPORT

1901

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

NEW YORK



ADVERTISEMENT.

---

THIS Letter on the Religious Education of Children, presented by Mr. *Benjamin Hedger*, and recommended by the Church at New-Mills, was committed to the examination of the Rev. Messrs. *Isaac Skillman*, *Henry Smalley*, and *Samuel Jones*, D. D. and is now re-published by order of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, October 8th, 1795, as appears from the following Extract from their Minutes :—

Art.



Art. 25. "The committee appointed to examine a piece on the Education of Children, recommend its publication ;—together with the Baltimore Circular Letter, written by the Rev. John Davis."



---

## *A CIRCULAR LETTER.*

THE ELDERS AND MESSENGERS OF A BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, HELD AT BROMSGROVE, IN WORCESTERSHIRE, JUNE 11 AND 12, 1783—  
TO THE SEVERAL CHURCHES THEY REPRESENT, SEND CHRISTIAN SALUTATION:

DEAR BRETHREN,

**BEING** once more assembled, with a sincere desire to promote the glory of God, and your spiritual edification, and having read your letters, and diligently attended to their contents; and in some measure mourned over your distresses, and rejoiced in your comforts and prosperity; we now send you our

*THOUGHTS ON THE MOST PROPER METHOD OF  
TRAINING UP YOUR TENDER OFFSPRING,  
FOR THEIR GOOD AND YOUR COMFORT, AND  
THE GLORY OF GOD.*

WE consider it as an essential part of every Christian Parent's duty, a matter of great importance in itself, and should be attended to with unremitting diligence, as far as your power and capacity will admit. It is the duty of all Parents to train up their Children in the best manner they can; and they who neglect their duty herein, are answerable for all the consequences which may follow.

The laws of God and nature have constituted Parents the heads, and rulers in their own respective families; and they are chargeable, in a measure, with all the evil actions done in their presence, or by their connivance. In this light Joshua understood the matter, when he uttered that holy resolution, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The same idea is conveyed to us by the Lord himself, in his remark on the good use which Abraham would make of his parental authority: "I know that Abraham will command his household after him." David assumes this authority over his own house: "He that

worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house ; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight."

As the power of governing families naturally devolves on parents, that power should be used to promote the advantage and best interest of the governed ; and when it is otherwise, the governors must necessarily become objects of blame.

The exercise of good government in a family, is a great blessing ; and they who are diligently occupied therein, shall have the pleasure of seeing its good effects. Means and end are joined together by a wise Providence ; and all who constantly attend to this duty of governing well, shall see the advantage, and reap the fruit of their labors, at least in some happy degree. And though conscientious parents should not have their utmost wishes fulfilled, nor see those effects which they earnestly desire, and reasonably expect ; yet they enjoy the satisfaction of having done their duty, which affords peace of conscience, and is to them a continual feast. All such have the blessing and approbation of God. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted ? —In keeping his commands there is a great reward—Well done, good and faithful servant—If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." It is a heinous sin to neglect our duty in training up our children. This was old Eli's great defect ; on which account, and for what took place in consequence thereof, the Lord both denounced and executed judgments on him and his family.

There is a path in which children should be trained up, and in which they ought continually to walk. They are not to be left to their own depraved inclinations, or to do what is right in their own eyes ; for children are under the divine law, as well as their parents, consequently care should be taken to instruct them in the knowledge of its precepts, so long as they are under parental authority. There is a time when parents will not be accountable for the conduct of their children ; but while under their government, it is their duty to train them up in the way which God has commanded. It is not natural for children to walk in this way ; therefore they must be trained to it, by those who have the care of them : nay, it is natural for all children to walk contrary to the pure and holy law of God ; for they are prone to evil as the sparks are to fly upwards. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction driveth it from him ;" Prov. xxii. 15. He that spares his rod hates his child. Children are born depraved : they are "shapen in iniquity," and by "nature the children of wrath." They are



of their "father the devil ; their hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually" As children are thus depraved and corrupt by nature, it is necessary they should be trained up in the paths of morality and true religion : to do this, is the duty of every parent, as far as his capacity will admit.

As soon as your children are able to take in ideas, you should convey into their minds reverend notions of the Divine Being. You should teach them to hold his names and titles sacred, and caution them never to use those names but in a religious sense, and then, with holy reverence : "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his name in vain." Men take God's name in vain, when they mention it without occasion, in their common discourse, which is but too frequently done ; and when they mention it in religious service without sincerity, reverence, or devotion. You should endeavor to impress the minds of your children with suitable ideas of the greatness, glory, and dreadful majesty of God, by properly instructing them in the knowledge of his divine perfection. Teach them to understand, that he is present every where ; that his eye is continually upon them, and that he notes down all we think, say, or do ; and will bring every idle word, with every secret thought, into judgment. Train up your children in a strict regard to the Sabbath, enforce the command upon their conscience : "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day—Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary." Reverence the Lord's sanctuary with your presence, and with the presence of your children and servants ; and shew them by your example, your love to God's house and ordinances, and the place where his honor dwells. Caution them against thinking their own thoughts, speaking their own words, or doing their own actions, on this holy day. After public service is over, you should keep them within doors ; make them read the Bible, or some other good and religious books. Make them duly attend family prayer, and take care they are never employed in any worldly business on the Lord's day, but what cannot be avoided.

Endeavor to train them up in a high veneration for the word of God : inform them whose word it is—the importance of what it contains—that it is infallibly true, and "able to make wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus."



You should read and expound the word of God to your children. Tell them their state and condition by nature, the heinousness and the dreadful effects of sin, the curse it entails on mankind; the hurt it does in the world, the punishment it incurs at the hand of a just and holy God. Shew them the happy and blessed effects of living in obedience to God's divine commands: "Obedience is better than sacrifice—They that honor me, I will honor—If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them—If ye do whatsoever I command you, then are ye my disciples indeed."

Shew them the necessity and reality of the new birth; prove to them, from the sacred text, that if they are not born again of the Spirit, they cannot see the kingdom of God—Thus you talk with them, when you sit in your houses, when you lie down, and when you arise, and when you walk by the way; for if you neglect thus to warn and instruct them, if they perish, God will require their blood at your hands. If the blood of perishing hearers is required at the hand of their ministers, who neglect to warn and teach them, with how much more propriety is the blood of a perishing son or daughter to be laid at the door of a parent who neglects his duty in warning, reproof, and instructing his own child? May every parent duly consider this.

Teach your children their need of daily prayer to God, by shewing them their continual dependence upon him for every thing they want, to make them happy in time and eternity. Shew them that there is no peace, comfort, or prosperity, but what comes from God, in a way of providence or grace. All our springs are in him: "In him we live, move, and have our being—Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of a change;" and from him we receive life, breath, and all things.

He is a prayer hearing, and a prayer answering God; he has made many exceeding great and precious promises to all who sincerely call upon him: "They who seek me early, shall find me—Ask and you shall receive—Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee—Ask that your joy may be full; for he gives his Holy Spirit to them that ask him—If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally." Tell your children what amazing wonders God has done in answer to prayer. Shew them how he has preserved his people in imminent danger—Jonah in the belly of the fish—Daniel in the

lion's den—The three children in the fiery furnace—Mordecai and the Jews, when the decree for their destruction was gone out against them. In answer to prayer, the Lord has shut up heaven, that it has not rained for three years and six months. In answer to prayer, he fetched Peter out of prison by an angel. In answer to prayer, God has "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, accomplished promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire," &c. Tell them the judgments that are denounced against prayerless persons. "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name;" Jer. x. 25. Neither son nor daughter in a Christian family should live without prayer, if they have a capacity to know there is a God, who rules and reigns as a God, who rules and reigns as God over all, and "doth what he will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth," &c.

Children should be trained up in industry: it is commendable; it will prove a blessing to them; they will have reason to thank God and you for it, through the whole of life. Industry cultivates the mind; preserves from a thousand evils, snares, and temptations, which idleness unavoidably leads into. It is obeying God's command: "Six days shalt thou labor." It helps a person to provide for himself and family in a comfortable and decent manner. It enables him to assist a friend, relieve the distressed, and contribute towards the spreading of the gospel. Idleness brings a man to disgrace and poverty; clothes him in rags, tempts him to steal and defraud mankind, and renders him a nuisance to society. Idleness has brought many to a shameful, ignominious end, and will bring many more, for its tendency leads this way. Industry is crowned with the blessing of the Most High: "The diligent hand maketh rich—Seest thou a man diligent in business? he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men—Up, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee."

Children should be trained up in sincerity and truth. Truth is what should be cultivated in them at times. Shew them the hurtful, hateful nature of lying in any affair, or concern whatever; that lying is forbidden in the pure and holy word of God: "Thou shalt not bear false witness—Let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay—Lie not one to another." Set before them the punishment denounced against all liars: that "they shall have their part in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone:" and point out to them the detestable practice of falsifying their word.

Lay before your children the horrid, abominable practice of injustice. Shew them that it is below the dignity of a rational mind; contrary to the law of nature, which teaches us to do to others, as we would they should do to us; that the word of God highly condemns it: "Thou shalt not steal—Defraud ye not one another." And when we see the least appearance of this in our children; we should reprimand them severely, and, after the first and second time of transgressing, the rod must be used; for he who spares the rod at such a season, hates his child. You may, by a timely correction, subdue this evil disposition, and save your child from shame, disgrace, and an ignominious death by the hand of justice. Many a child has been plucked, as a brand out of the burning, by this means.

Train up your children to the use of decent and becoming language: this will make them appear amiable both to you and others: "Words fitly spoken, are like apples of gold in pictures of silver." By such language abundance of sin will be prevented, and your children will enjoy the happy and blessed fruits and effects thereof. Tell them, that every idle word must be brought into judgment.

Endeavor to prevent your children from using prophane words and all prophane swearing, by checking the very first appearance of it. If parents were to do their duty in this particular, there would not be a prophane word or oath heard in our land. The horrid practice of prophane swearing would become unfashionable to mankind; it would be detested and abhorred as language unfit for a rational being. It is a practice so ridiculous, scandalous, and horrible, that all men, if taught, would become ashamed of it, detest and abominate it. It is a first-rate sin, and not exceeded by any, except a total rejection of God.

All obscene language should be silenced in your children in a moment, and not a whisper of it heard from the beginning to the end of the year. They who suffer such language to proceed from their children uncorrected, are nursing up a family for the devil, and will be chargeable with their guilt. Can any Christian parent hear a child utter such unseemly language in his presence, and not correct it? No, it is impossible; for his ears are too chaste to hear such filthy conversation: it will, like Lot's of old, "grieve his righteous soul."

Train up your children in an esteem and reverence for good people: point out to them the advantage of good company:



shew them the pernicious effects of bad connections, for nothing vitiates the minds and morals of young people more than bad companions: "One sinner destroys much good—Evil communications corrupt good manners—Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord." What connection hath a Christian with an Infidel? "Destruction is in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known—Their ways lead down to death, and their steps take hold of destruction." As you tender the welfare of your children, keep them from the paths of the wicked; and however desirous they are of such company, lay an absolute restraint upon them, lest you be accessary to their ruin. In good connections there is no danger of their morals being tainted, or their minds depraved, or their characters stained. Nay, they will rather be gainers than losers, by keeping company with spiritual, holy people. How many have dated their ruin from commencing acquaintance with the wicked? In bad companies you have every thing bad to fear, but nothing to excite hope, or a possibility of receiving good from them. Strict morality, and pure religion cannot live in such connections; and their health, reputation, and property, are all in danger, while they associate with the wicked. Wicked companions lead to greater lengths in sin than can possibly be attained when alone. The wicked increase in wickedness by the assistance of each other, and by laying their heads and hearts together in contriving sinful acts: their resolutions are greatly strengthened, their principles of education weakened, and the voice of conscience stopped. If parents would see their children do well for time and eternity, let them take special care that they never spend their precious moments in connections which threaten danger. Bad companions are a grievous curse to mankind, and have proved the bane of thousands: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked—Woe to the wicked for it shall go ill with him; but the blessing of the Lord is with the righteous."

Train up your children to behave in a suitable manner to all mankind; whether superiors, inferiors, or equals: for this is advantageous to themselves, beautiful in the sight of others, and approved by all: it commands respect from men of sense; it yields peace to the mind, is pleasing to God, and attended with his blessing. He has said in his word, "honor to whom honor—Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head."

Charge your children that they never sport themselves with the weakness, defects, blemishes, or poverty of others. Shew them how abominable it is to divert themselves with their fellow

creatures, because they are not so beautiful, healthy, honorable, wise, or rich, as it hath pleased God to make them. If they are superior to others in any, of all these, they ought to be humble and thankful; and you should endeavor to make them so too, by shewing them their superior obligations to God; and that it is their duty to be more useful in their station: "Where much is given, much is required—Who maketh thee to differ from another?—What hast thou, that thou didst not receive?—Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

Train up your children with proper ideas of the odious, hateful nature of an haughty, oppressive, injurious, cruel, morose disposition and behaviour; cultivate in them an humble, benevolent, sympathising, generous, friendly, affable, meek and gentle spirit. To accomplish these ends, you should represent to them how contrary the former dispositions are to real religion; how destructive to the peace of mankind, the happiness of themselves and others. Shew them the awful threatening denounced against them, who entertain such dispositions in their hearts, and discover them in their lives. Point out to them the amiableness, beauty, and excellency of the latter, how becoming the man and the Christian; how suitable to the word of God, the nature of Christianity, and the character of a child of grace. Divine inspiration says, "Be kindly affectionate one to another—Put away all malice, wrath, and evil speaking—Put on bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, and long-sufferings—Be kind one to another; tender hearted, and forgive one another in love, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us." Tell them the pleasure, peace, and happiness attending such a disposition, and the misery of those who are destitute of it.—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." They are prepared to enjoy the sweets of nature, while a man of a savage temper carries that within him, which gnaws his very vitals. No man needs a greater torment than a cruel disposition; for it eats out all peace, comfort and happiness. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy—Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." Such a disposition clearly indicates to whom they belong, and shews that such a spirit answers to a gracious principle in the heart. Tell them how much the opposite temper resembles the spirit of darkness; and their desert, if God were to lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.

Train up your children in true notions of temperance and frugality. Cultivate in them an abhorrence of intemperance, pro-

digality, sinful extravagance, and a waste of the good things of this life. Inform them that they have no power to create a dust or a drop ; convince them that it requires creating power to furnish the necessaries of life : and shall we wickedly waste what none can provide but God himself ? Shew your children how many families have come to poverty, by a wasteful extravagant way of living. Set before them the many blessed effects which attend care and frugality. How many persons and families have rose from meanness and obscurity, by care, industry, frugality, and the blessing of God, which generally attend the diligent and careful ? None but the careful can be of service in their day and generation, because they wastefully consume it all on themselves. A frugal man can assist his friend, relieve the distressed, promote the cause of Christ in the world, and sometimes rescue a brother from destruction ; but a wasteful person has it not in his power, for his continual wastefulness is like a daily consumption on his substance ; therefore, suffer not your children to waste or consume the smallest blessing.\*

Train up your children to be charitable and liberal, where it is necessary. Shew them the advantage arising from thence ; for God abundantly blesses those who relieve the necessities of proper objects, from a right spirit : “ He who gives to the poor, lends to the Lord,” who will repay with good interest—“ A cup of cold water given to a disciple of Christ in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward.” The liberal hand shall be liberally supplied. To the bountiful he is bountiful. The widow’s mite shall not pass unnoticed by an all-seeing God. How often has the widow’s heart been made to sing praises to God for the bounties of the liberal hand ? How many souls in heaven are now praising God, that he put it into the hearts of some men to support the gospel, by their contributions, which proved, through the Spirit’s operation, savingly beneficial to their souls ? Teach your children to exercise charity with prudence ; for it is no charity to relieve those who waste, and wickedly spend what they receive : neither is it charity to give those who live in a less frugal way than ourselves. Charity prudently done, affords great pleasure both to the giver and receiver, and will be followed with a divine blessing. God will not forget “ our work and labor of love.”

\* If six persons in a family wastefully consume each of them but one penny a day, it will amount to nine pounds in one year ; and in proportion according to their number, and wasteful practice.



Let not your children follow cards and dice, horse-races and cock-fighting, with other practices of a gambling nature ; for they are of a most pernicious quality, and attended with baneful consequences ; such as idleness, dissipation, injustice, and falsehood. If your children once fall into this hurtful practice, it will devour their time, corrupt their thoughts, and waste their property. Gaming puts the mind continually upon the rack, fills it with a multitude of anxieties of a very disagreeable nature ; and leaves neither room nor time for better employ, and more profitable subjects. Gaming corrupts honesty, turns the mind into a nest of villany, and vitiates the whole soul. Gaming, when attended with success, hardens the mind in this pernicious practice, and drives it from every thing serious, and fills it with vanity and prodigality, for, to use the old proverb, “ Lightly come, lightly gone.” And how can we expect it otherwise, when the practice has such a tendency to corrupt and vitiate the minds and words of men ? If a gamester loses by his practice, it makes him doubly active in trying every base art, and cunning device, to see if he can retrieve himself ; and if he fails here, it leads him to other bad practices, whereby he may make up his deficiencies, which have often proved fatal in a short time. Such is the baneful practice of gaming.

Train up your children strangers to the gay circles of human life ; such as revellings, banquetings, balls, stage-plays, and all other carnal diversions, and sensual amusements ; for these are attended with ten thousand evils, but not one advantage can be derived from them. They debauch the minds and morals of men beyond any thing the devil has ever yet invented. They beset, intoxicate, and destroy whole nations. Many who will not be seen in the more gross and vulgar scenes of wickedness, are found here by crowds. These scenes are thought polite, genteel, fashionable, and refined ; but inspired Paul says, “ She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth.” John the Baptist lost his head through one of these festival dancing bouts, which shews how diametrically opposite they are to a true Christian character.

Train up your children in an habitual dislike to the vain modes, manners, customs, and fashions of the present day. There are few, if any customs and fashions in the world, but what are vain, wicked and carnal. We may be sure, that carnal minds will pursue carnal fashions ; for “ The world wanders after the beast.” Hence our Lord says, “ If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” If the natural disposition of the mind were not carnal, and averse to that which

is good, pray what occasion to deny ourselves in following Christ? But this thing is too plain to be contradicted; for by nature we are "carnal, sold under sin," and averse to every thing that is good. The carnal world is so far from being a model for our conduct and conversation, and so far from being pleasing to God, that John the Divine says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him—For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." It is impossible that the world should approve any thing but what is pleasing to depraved nature. Were it possible to form a dress, a behaviour, and a conversation the most expressive of true godliness, the world would hate, detest, and abhor such cloathing, such conversation, and such behaviour; because "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" consequently, against every thing that has the resemblance of him.

Train up your children in the knowledge of all the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. They who neglect this, neglect one great part of their duty in the education of their children. As the gospel is the greatest blessing mankind is favored with in this world, it is the duty of every parent to train up his children in the knowledge of it, to the utmost of his power. To this end, teach your children the Catechism, which contains a summary of the Christian religion. Take care that this short-compendium be well fixed in their minds, memories and judgments. Furnish them with proper reasons and arguments for what they are taught to believe and practise. Get Mr. Beddome's Exposition of the Catechism, and make them read it over once every month through the year. This, with a divine blessing, will prove an excellent method to ground your children in all the fundamentals of religion, and make them "wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus;" which is the hearty, sincere desire of your brethren in our dear Lord.

Train up your children to read good and profitable books, such as are calculated for their real advantage, either in the civil, moral, or religious life. Never suffer them to read books that have a tendency to corrupt their morals, inflame their depraved passions, or give them a taste for the vain customs, manners, or fashions of carnal men. Be careful, therefore, to prevent their reading foolish songs, novels, plays, intrigues, romances, or whatever has a tendency to corrupt the mind. These things have been the cause of ruining many a young person. Thousands have had reason to execrate all such books, on account of the

effects they have experienced from them. These pernicious productions have slain their thousands, and tens of thousands, and vitiated the morals of whole nations. All such writers are a curse to the land where they reside, and should be discountenanced by every lover of morality, and true religion.

Education has a powerful influence upon the human mind: its force may be seen in every sect and party through this and other kingdoms. Things the most absurd in religion, are adhered to by the rising generation with as much firmness and stability, as if they were stamped with divine inspiration. A papist may be taught to believe a priest, or the pope, sooner than the Lord of heaven and earth; and that mere bread is the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Others are taught to disdain every divine institution in the Christian religion, and made to believe that the holy ordinances are beggarly elements. Some are taught to slight divine institutions, and are induced to degrade them; calling them non-essentials or circumstantial; and thereby look upon it as a matter of indifference, whether they believe as Christ teaches, and do as he bids them or not. And education has such an influence upon them herein, that they will abide by these sentiments as firmly as if they had the command of God, the example of Christ, and the practice of the Apostles for what they do. Numbers of this stamp we have in this nation, who have nothing to support them in their belief and practice, but custom, human tradition, or the force of education, without one passage of scripture, which should be our only rule for faith and practice in religion.

From these things, the influence of education upon all ranks and degrees of men evidently appears; and how necessary it is for all God's people to take care, to the utmost of their power, in the education of their children. If training up in error and absurdity has such influence upon the human mind, as daily observation confirms, surely truth, good sense, and the infallible Word of God, will have no less force, under a divine blessing, if the same pains are taken to impress and stamp the mind with them.

We have the word of God to encourage us in the diligent use of all the means in our possession: "Train up a child, in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." If good education were attended to by every parent, there would be an outward reformation through the whole world; for though all might not equally profit by it, yet it would lay such a restraint upon the most obdurate, as not easily to be broken through, and



it would form and mould such numbers into a decent behaviour, as would produce a majority, and thereby weaken the power of the prophane and profligate.

The greatest part of all outward acts of sin, may, with justice, be charged upon the want of Education. Is it not a just observation, and proper remark: "Like father, like son; like priest, like people?" What an amazing blessing is good education! May all those who are favored with it, learn to prize it, be truly thankful for it, and make a proper improvement of it. What accumulated and aggravating sins must those be guilty of, who break through all bonds of a good education? What bitter reflections must the conduct of some children give their parents, who have entirely neglected their education? But, on the other hand, what peace and pleasure have some parents, in seeing the blessing of God, and the smiles of heaven, crowning their endeavours herein? May the Lord graciously help you to do your duty in this particular, and own it for the present and eternal welfare of your offspring, is the earnest desire of your brethren in our dear Lord.

Signed, on behalf of the whole, by the Moderator,

T. THOMAS.



---

## *Baltimore Circular Letter.*

---

THE BALTIMORE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,  
MEETING IN THE TOWN OF BALTIMORE,  
AUGUST 10th, 1795 :—TO THE CHURCHES  
WHOM WE REPRESENT.

*BELoved BRETHREN,*

**H**AVING had a comfortable interview with each other, and a pleasing intelligence from the churches, that they are firmly attached unto the truth they profess, trusting that they endeavour to adorn the doctrines of the gospel by a holy living—may the Lord cause the churches to grow in grace, and that the beauty of vital holiness and brotherly love, may abundantly appear among the brethren—may not the day of small things discourage you, but rejoice that there are small beginnings ; it was not always so as even now ; remember he that sowed the mustard seed ; he did it in his own time, and in his own time he can cause it to grow up to a large tree—be encouraged then, to wait patiently in the use of God's appointed means ; you know not how soon he may raise up many sons and daughters unto Abraham, and add many unto his little churches, such as shall be saved.

It may be remembered, by some at least, that at our annual meeting in the year 1794, that there was a subject appointed for discussion this year ; which was to show, wherein a Strong, and a Weak Faith differed.—This we shall attempt to do in as few words as possible, doing justice to the subject.

In order to put the matter in a clearer light, to weak understandings, it may be necessary (though they differ) to shew in what respects they agree :—



1st. They differ not in the remote cause, which is the free grace and love of God; from this fountain came that great gift of Christ, and in, and through him, come all the graces of the spirit in their full latitude. A strong Faith, and a weak Faith is the fruit of *Electing Love*—"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

2d. They differ not in their immediate cause, which is the spirit of God: Col. ch. ii. ver. 12. "Through the faith of the operation of God." As in the orchard, the tree which standeth strong, and the tender plant which stands trembling, both were set by the same hand.

3d. They differ not in their essence: a strong man and a weak man differ in respect of power and working; yet they both agree in the nature of man, and in respect of being.

4th. They differ not as to their special objects: they both look unto promises as made in Christ, as the foundations of their hope.

5th. They differ not in their ends, which are the glory of God, and the salvation of the soul.

So far they agree, yet there is a diversity with regard to strength: you may see one Christian look up to heaven with tears of joy, as Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" another looking up with tears of grief, saying, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner."

A strong Faith can triumph above all fears, saying, "I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me from the love of God in Christ;" a weak faith combating with many fears, saying, "but will the Lord be favorable to me;" he ventures like Esther towards the sceptre, "If I perish, I perish." But how comes it to pass that there is such a difference? For this, take the following reasons:

1st. Let it be remembered, that Faith is never grounded in ignorance or total darkness, but in knowledge and light; but a weak faith has not so clear a knowledge of the extensiveness of Christ's mediation, his fullness, and suitableness to the state of a poor sinner, as a strong faith has.

2d. The diversity may sometimes be ascribed to the age of

faith : in some it has had a longer time to strengthen, in others like seed newly sown.

3d. Some are brought up in a more fertile soil, or under a ministry more experimentally acquainted with *inward conflicts*, and therefore better qualified to address tender consciences.

4th. Some undergo severer trials, and more difficult services than others, so they have different measures of faith given them according to the different degrees of exigence.

5th. The diversity of degrees may be ascribed to the assistance of the *spirit*, which is like wind blowing where it listeth.

Now we will proceed to give some instances of a Strong and Weak Faith.

1st. Confidence in a single word for great matters is an argument of a strong faith, as in the Centurion, who came to Christ, "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed," what said Christ! Verily said he, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." But when the heart is inclined to a life of sense, and cannot be persuaded by the naked word, without sensible pledges, he is weak in faith : like Thomas, without he seeth the print of the nails, he will not believe : unless he feels the favor of Christ in a sensible manner, he will not believe that God loves him. If strong faith seeth salvation in the promise, it goes away rejoicing. If weak faith has not some of the inheritance in his own hand, as well as in God's hand, it is afraid,

2d. A strong faith will take encouragement from that, which would discourage a weak faith ; the woman of Canaan that came to Christ, said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David ;" he answered her not a word. Christ's silence caused her to raise her voice the higher. The disciples said, "send her away, for she crieth after us." Again, she came and worshipped him, saying, "Lord help me." He answered, "It is not meet to take the childrens' bread, and cast it to dogs." She takes the hint. "Truth Lord, the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table." Then Jesus said, "O woman, great is thy faith ;" that faith that will press on against discouragements, though God do not immediately answer ; will still cry for mercy, as one said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," may be called a strong faith. As to a weak faith, one word of God is not enough : God has to speak again more clearly, as Gideon

must have one sign after another, the fleece must be wet and the earth dry ; then another, the fleece must be dry and the earth wet : Judges vi. 37, 39. This shewed weakness in his faith. As to a weak faith, all the promises and arguments in God and Christ, can scarcely persuade him, that God will be merciful to him.

3d. A strong faith can hope against hope, his expectation is grounded on the promise alone ; as in Abraham's case—he wanted a son—God promised him an Isaac. There was nothing in nature to encourage his faith, every thing was against him but the promise ; but he considered how able God was to perform his promise. The more strength a naked *promise* hath with a soul when it alone gives peace and quietness, the stronger faith is. But when the soul looks for inward qualifications for encouragement to believe ; it argues a weak faith. Whatever we join with Christ, or the promise in point of dependence, be it ever so good, has a tendency to weaken faith. Good things in possession are matters of thankfulness, but considered as promised, they are matters of faith and dependence.

4th. A strong faith can more easily comply with changes and different vicissitudes of Providence, than a weak faith. There are many changes, incident to a man's temporal life. Sometimes we abound, and our mountain is strong. Anon, comes adversity, and our mountain is shaken ; now under these changes, not to be changed, provided it proceeds not from a stupid insensibility, but from an apprehension of the wisdom and goodness of God, it shews a strong faith—Like Job, in his adversity, he still blessed God. The more passive the heart is, the more active faith is. Paul had learned that lesson : “ In every state therewith to be contented.” But a weak faith, is like Gideon in another case—If the Lord be with us, why is all this evil befallen us ? A weak faith is apt, under crosses, by losses and disappointments, to draw conclusions against itself, not considering, “ that every son whom he loveth he chastiseth,” and to be anxious about a living in the world, as what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, or wherewithall shall we be clothed ; this, our Saviour faith, sheweth little faith : Matthew vi. 30. God has done more for believers than the world is worth ; therefore, to suspect him for small matters, which he also promiseth, shews little faith.

5th. When sin gets to be more dead, and more ineffectual in its temptations, it proves the strength of faith. A strong faith is enabled to subdue sin, *by arguments drawn from Evangelical truth*, such as God's everlasting love, the gift of his son, the evil of



sin in the death of Christ. He sees the wonderful things God has done for him, and engaged in promise yet to do more : these truths being impressed on the heart by the *Spirit*, have a mighty influence—a constraining power to beget watchfulness against the first motions of sin. Seeing how *unreasonable* it is to sin against such a good God, he prays for strength to subdue the power of inbred corruptions. A person's knowledge being scanty in gospel truths, and the mind not being exercised in a due manner, being too much influenced by a legal spirit, trusting in their own strength, they are apt to fall in an hour of temptation. When *Peter* trusted in his own strength, he denied his Lord, which shewed his faith to be weak. We allow faith to be true *when sin is resisted*, but to conquer sin, shews strength of faith; to wrestle is something, but to conquer is more.

6th. A strong faith has the *immutability of God* in his eye, hence the Apostle to the Hebrews, ch. vi. ver. 18. for the confirmation of their faith, puts them in mind of the immutability of God's council, and that it was impossible for God to lie : upon this foundation, even *the stability of the promises*, the stability of the Saints is founded: so we read, that God changeth not; therefore, the sons of Jacob are not consumed.

But a weak faith is apt to make an estimate of his eternal state by his frames, which are as changeable as the wind ; while warm they have a comfortable hope : after a while, they are cold, then they are almost ready to give up ; they would, had it not been, that “ the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.”

Now we shall give a few hints that, though a weak faith is opposed to a strong faith, yet it is not opposed to a true faith.

1st. A weak faith, though it is not sure Christ is its Saviour, yet it honors Christ as Lord. Thomas could say, ‘My Lord, and my God ;’ he would be subject to no law but that of Christ ; he loves his doctrines ; he loves his ordinances.

2d. Though a weak faith cannot say Christ is his friend, he can say *sin is his enemy*.

3d. A weak faith, though it has not much comfort in believing, unbelief and hardness of heart is a burden and trouble to him.

4th. Weak faith will not rest in weakness ; he will be doing ; he loves to attend the means where Christ is exhibited : if he steps a little above his doubtings by an apprehension of a darting beam, he is persuaded all is well, and will be well : he is ready to say, ' How good is the Lord ! what shall I render unto God ?'

5th. A weak faith, if put to it, to determine upon *one* of *two* things, either to renounce all hope in Christ, and take his chance some other way, or else to throw itself upon Christ, though in the dark, even a weak faith will discover itself ; *it will not renounce his hidden interest in Christ* ; it will venture its all into the hand of Christ, saying, " If I perish, I perish." *Amen.*

Signed by

WILLIAM CLINGAN, Moderator.

CHARLES P. POLK, Clerk.

## APPENDIX.

THE following Articles concerning the ecclesiastical standing of baptized children, and the duties of the professing members of the Church towards them, have been adopted by the First Presbyterian Church of Durham, as expressive of some of their leading sentiments on this subject. With the approbation of the Presbytery, to which this Church belongs, they are now subjoined to the Discourses. These Articles may be of some use to those who have been long thinking and talking on the neglected duties of the Church towards her Covenant seed. They may serve to bring them to look more *directly* at the subject. With this sketch before them, they can set out; and add or subtract, as shall appear to them necessary.

The Articles were first brought before the Church by a committee, appointed for that purpose. In this original form they are now given to the public.

*The Church's committee, appointed to draw up something concerning the relation in which baptized children stand to the Church, and the duty of the Church towards them, submit the following report.*

I. They are of opinion, that the subject referred to them is one of the most weighty and interesting which can occupy the attention of a Christian Church. They consider that the glory of God,—the beauty of the Church,—the salvation of the seed of believers,—and the peace and comfort of those parents who have given their children to God in covenant, call for a very serious attention to this subject.

[Mal. iv. 5, 6. "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."]

II. The committee are of opinion, that the 12th Article of the Church's Confession of Faith is correct, as it respects the relation of Children to the Church: in which it is said; "That Christ now has, and ever has had, a Church in the world, which, in its visible form, is composed of all who profess faith in him, and submit to the laws of his kingdom, *together with their children.*" We consider that the children of professing parents do from their birth bear a relation to the covenant of grace, on which the Church is built; and that one design of their baptism is to denote that relation.

[Mark x. 14. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."]

In Rom. xi. 21, the seed of the Church, in distinction from all its other members, are called the *natural branches* of the olive tree.]



III. The children are considered as bearing this relation to the Church wholly through the medium of their covenant parents.\* They are in the Church, not as *professors*, or active members, until they voluntarily take hold of God's covenant : but they are to be considered as the children,—the seed of the Church ; brought into the family of Christ to be trained up for him.

[\* That is,—Infants, or children, bear no relation to the Church considered as *infants* or *children*, but merely as being the children of parents who are in covenant with God. Therefore while there is the greatest propriety in baptizing the children of such parents, there is not the least propriety in a promiscuous baptism of all the children which are born in Christendom.]

Gen. xvii. 23. "And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house ; and bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the self-same day, as God had said unto him." *Abraham* believed, therefore *Ishmael* and all his household received the seal of the covenant

Exod. xii. 48. "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised." These were to be circumcised wholly on account of the relation which they bore to the stranger, who believed in Abraham's God.

Acts xvi. 14, 15.—"Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when *she was baptized and her household*," &c. Cor. vii. 14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband : else were your children unclean ; but now are they holy." If neither parent had possessed any title to the covenant, then there could be no title for the children. They would have no connexion with the "holy nation."]

IV. We consider the covenant of Abraham, (that is, the covenant of grace,) on which the Church of Christ in every age is built, as containing promises of *saving good* to our children, in case that we as parents put our trust in God's gracious promises, and are enabled faithfully to keep covenant with him in their religious education.

[Gen. xvii. 7. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an *everlasting covenant* : to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." With this compare Gen. xviii. 19. : "For I know him, that he will command his *children* and his *household* after him ; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord may bring upon *Abraham* that which he hath spoken of him."

Isa. lxi. 8, 9.—"And I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an *everlasting covenant* with them. And *their seed* shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people : all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." It will be no longer denied that the covenant contained blessings for the seed of the Church. Prov. xxii. 6. "Train up a child in the way he should go ; and when he is old he will not depart from it."]

V. A Church in its collective capacity is bound to watch over all its children : but while they are in minority, this watch is more particularly to be exercised through the medium of their covenant parents.

[Eph. vi. 4. "And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath ; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is a part of an epistle directed to a particular Church. Among the duties enjoined on this Church, one is the religious education of their children : And this education of their children, it seems, was particularly required at the hand of their fathers or parents.]

VI. If during the age of minority a child is stubborn and refuses obedience to his parents,—after the Church are well assured of it, and also that the parents have made every suitable exertion to reclaim him; and when they, as a Church, have taken suitable measures in concert with the parents to effect so desirable a thing as the reformation of the child; should these means fail of success, he is to be publicly cut off and disowned by the Church, as being no longer one of their covenant children.

[Deut. xxi. 18, 21. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken to them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place: And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear."

If the parents of such a stubborn and rebellious son should neglect to solicit the Church to grant them aid in reducing him to subjection, it would in this case no doubt become the duty of the Church to inquire into the matter, and extend their discipline either to the parents, or to the child, as they should find the case to require.

This and the preceding Article have special reference to the discipline of baptized members while under age; but they were not designed to intimate, that the discipline of such members ceased with their minority. The contrary sentiment is manifestly implied, when it is said, "A Church in its collective capacity is bound to watch over all its children: *but while they are in minority* this watch is more particularly to be exercised through the medium of their covenant parents." This obviously implies, that the Church in its collective capacity is bound to continue its watch over its baptized children, even after they have gone from under the paternal roof, and from under the immediate inspection of their parents.]

VII. The religious education of children implies: 1. That we exercise faith in God's gracious promises concerning the children of believers.\* 2. That we pray for them, and with them.†— 3. That we instruct them into the doctrine of Christ.‡ 4. That we exercise a kind and benevolent government over them, requiring them to obey God's commandments, and forbidding and restraining them from things displeasing to God and contrary to his word; particularly from sinful gaming, tavern-haunting, balls, profane swearing, profaning the sabbath, and other evident breaches of the Divine commands.§

[\* Gen. xii. 5, 6.—"And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Mark ix. 23.—"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Prov. iii. 5, 6.—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,—and he shall direct thy paths." Mat. xv. 28.—"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

† James v. 16.—"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." 1 Chron. xvi. 43.—"And David returned" (i. e. from the services of the sanctuary) "to bless his house." Josh. xxiv. 15.—"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

‡ Deut. vi. 6, 7.—"And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt diligently teach them unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Eph. vi. 4.—"But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

§ Of Abraham it is said, "He will command his children and his household after him."—Gen. xviii. 19. Of Eli it is said to his dishonor, "His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."—1 Sam. iii. 13. It is also mentioned to the disad-



vantage of David in the treatment of his son Adonijah, that "his father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, Why hast thou done so?"—1 Kings i. 6

As to the things specified in the preceding Article, from which it is considered as the duty of parents to restrain their children, there will probably be but one mind among Christian parents, unless they should be divided on the subject of restraining their children from attending balls. We apprehend, however, that the difference of sentiment on this subject between serious Christians of different communions, and in the different grades of society, is not great. It appears, at least, to be a general sentiment among them, that balls or dancing assemblies, have a very prejudicial influence upon that life of piety, which, when the scenes of eternity are disclosed, we shall all see that it behooved us to have lived. They are, we believe, generally viewed as a vain amusement, and as a great hinderance to early piety. As some proof of a harmony of sentiment among Christians on this subject, we shall refer to one or two printed documents. The first to which we shall refer is a Pastoral Letter from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States, to the Churches under their care. This Letter was published in June, 1818; and contains the following remarks on Dancing: "With respect to *Dancing*, we think it necessary to observe, that however plausible it may appear to some, it is perhaps not the less dangerous on account of that plausibility. It is not from those things which the world acknowledges to be most wrong, that the greatest danger is to be apprehended to religion, especially as it relates to the young. When the practice is carried to its highest extremes, all admit the consequences to be fatal; and why then not apprehend danger, even from its incipient stages. It is certainly in all its stages a fascinating and infatuating practice. Let it be once introduced, and it is difficult to give it limits. It steals away our precious time, dissipates religious impressions, and hardens the heart. To guard you, beloved brethren, against its wiles and its fascinations, we earnestly recommend that you will consult that sobriety which the sacred pages require. We also trust, that you will attend with the meekness and docility becoming the Christian character, to the admonitions on this subject, of those whom you have chosen to watch for your souls."

Another document of a different denomination of Christians, to which we shall refer, can be found in the Religious Intelligencer, Vol. III p. 64. The document with its caption is as follows:—"The following resolution of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, lately assembled in Winchester, is furnished for publication by the secretary of the Convention, for the purpose of giving the earliest information on the subject, which is considered interesting and important.

*In Convention, May, 22, 1818.*

Whereas differences of opinion prevail as to certain fashionable amusements; and it appears desirable to many, that the sense of the Convention should be expressed concerning them; the Convention does hereby declare its opinion that Gaming, attending on Theatres, *Public Balls*, and Horse-racing, should be relinquished by all communicants of this Church, as having the bad effects of staining the purity of the Christian character—of giving offence to their pious brethren—and of endangering their own salvation by their rushing, voluntarily, into those temptations against which they implore the protection of their heavenly Father: and this Convention cherishes the hope, that this expression of its opinion will be sufficient to produce conformity of conduct and unanimity of opinion among all the members of our communion.

The above is an extract from the proceedings.

Wm. MUNFORD,  
Secretary to the Convention."

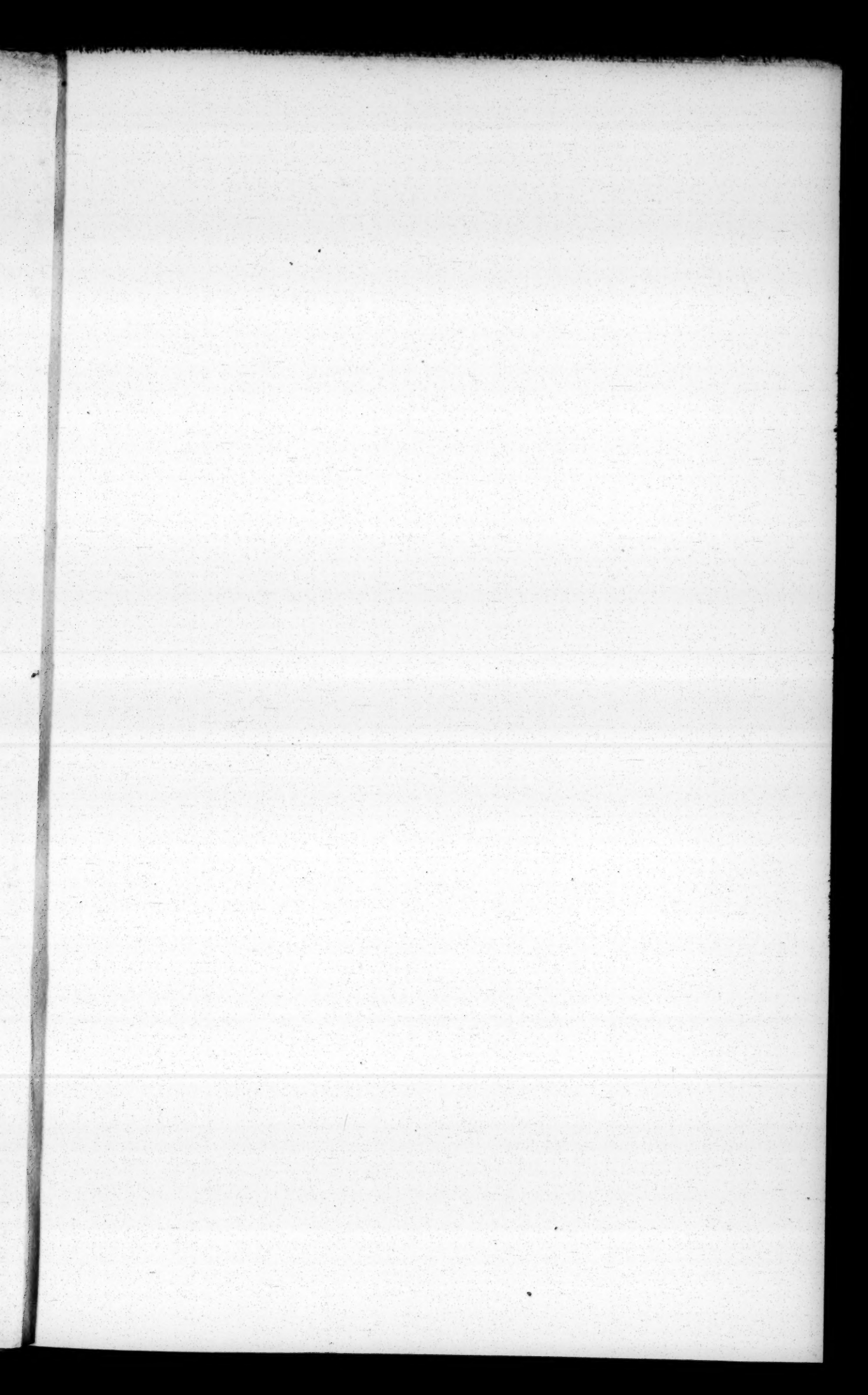
Concerning balls and dancing assemblies, it may be added; that they seem to be contrary to the spirit of such passages, as Eccl. vii. 2—6. and xi. 9. 10. compared with xii. 1. Job xxi. 11—14. Prov. xiv. 13. Amos vi. 3—6. Luke vi. 25. Titus ii. 6. Jam. iv. 8, 9. &c.

Concerning these amusements, it is worthy to be noted; that a general work of the Spirit, while it lasts, sets them entirely aside; and they can be revived only by a withdrawal of His influence, who reproves of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is also worthy of notice, that those youth, of whatever grade in society, who appear to become subjects of His sanctifying influence, are generally agreed in saying, that these are things of a bad and dangerous tendency.]

VIII. Those parents who neglect this manner of training up their children in the way they should go, ought to be considered as breaking covenant with God, and with the Church.

10 00 67





3506 c 67